

In our limited lifespan, all of us are, many times witnesses and at times victims, of the popular theory of change. The wet grinder, whose base stone was once stationary and the arm stone was revolving, is otherwise now. In the past few decades, we had seen many such victims of this inevitable change theory, of which, typewriters, camera films, STD telephones and audio/ video cassettes are few.

William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, an Irish surgeon and inventor who had joined the British East India Company army in Calcutta, was asked by Governor **General Lord Dalhousie** to lay the first telegraph line from the city to Diamond Harbour, some 13 miles away. In 1850, he successfully transmitted his first message and within a few years, this network of copper wires atop iron rods supported by bamboos extended some 4,000 miles across the thick jungles, roaring rivers and snow-capped Himalayas of India. Along with the railways, the telegraph network further established the British Empire in India and in 1857 the British army successfully used the telegraph to subdue the first war of Indian Independence.

Independent India used telegrams to convey very important and urgent information, mostly the demise of relatives, eloping couples informing their parents about their runaway marriage, etc.

I have a very fond and a close relationship with telegrams as the first telegram I received in my life was about informing my selection to a government job. In fact, telegrams had been very effective in my present profession too, as they were the handy tools in retracting VOLUNTARY statements!!!

On 15th July 2013, the 163 year old telegram service was given a RIP by BSNL, the official operator of telegram service as its traffic had dropped to about 5,000 a day, down from several hundred thousands before the arrival of fax machines and then the internet.

I read that one Ashwani Mishra, sent the last telegram to the Congress Vice – President Mr. Rahul Gandhi. If I were to send, I would have preferred our beloved PC with the message “ When is GST?”